

RETALIATE

GOVERNOR BLAINE may care to have a word with the legislature about Minnesota's ruling requiring Wisconsin and other outside cars to have a Minnesota license for temporary or occasional visits across the border. This appears to be a fling at neighboring states which calls for prompt retaliation. Of course retaliation would not make the burden any lighter for Wisconsin drivers who have to lack on Minnesota licenses, but it might bring our neighbors to a realization of the effect of such a law, and probably make them wonder if the game is worth the candle.

The game, of course, is to collect from visiting motorists a toll which shall more or less cover the wear and tear of their cars on Minnesota roads. At least, this is the only decent motive that Minnesota can invoke. If that is not the real purpose, the thing is just a plain hold-up. We prefer to accept highway maintenance as the motive. But even so we believe it can easily be demonstrated that Minnesota's action is short-sighted as well as ungenerous. Short-sighted, because its effect will be to restrict and diminish foreign traffic on Minnesota roads, and that will cost the state more than any return it can expect from the new rule. One wonders how Minnesota squares the decision to tax outside cars with its great campaign for the attraction of tourists to her lakes and forest reserves.

Minnesota is late starting on her road program, perhaps five years at the least behind this state. It is expensive, without doubt, but as Wisconsin knows, it pays. But it will not get returns commensurate with the cost if the state tries to "make the foreigner pay the tax." The foreigner simply stays away when the effort is made, and instead of a flood of money poured out by tourists from which Minnesota taxpayers can get the cost of their new roads, the state will have a big bill to foot by itself.

Minnesota is, we believe, the first state to refuse recognition to the motor licenses of other states. It is a precedent which, if Minnesota gets away with it, may be followed elsewhere with a tendency to restrict traffic within state boundaries. That will be as bad for the breadth of outlook and solidarity of the nation as it will be costly for states now centers of tourist travel. For the good of the nation the Minnesota idea should be stopped before it really gets under way. Probably the best procedure would be for every neighboring state to enact frankly retaliatory legislation, which would put Minnesota cars—and Minnesota cars only—under the same disability which foreign cars sustain in Minnesota. Possibly the governor may see fit to take the matter up with the governors of Iowa and North and South Dakota. Should these states get together Minnesota might be given a chance to feel the effect of her bright idea. It is not improbable that she would find it too unpleasant to maintain.